I. AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as indicated in the following listing:

1-35 Canceled.

36. (New) A method for using topic tags in an Instant Messaging System, comprising:

identifying a topic by performing a first plurality of steps comprising:

displaying a topic tag for a chat using an instant messaging service that allows a user to send and receive text messages in real time with an other user;

determining whether the user wants to accept the topic tag;

responsive to determining that the user does not want to accept the topic tag, determining whether the user wants to distinguish the topic tag;

responsive to determining that the user wants to distinguish the topic tag, entering a term for the topic tag by the user;

responsive to entering a term for the topic tag, determining whether the other user accepts the term for the topic tag; and

responsive the other user not accepting the term for the topic tag, using a default topic tag as the topic tag;

inserting the topic tag into the chat's text;

responsive to the user identifying a subtopic tag for the chat, inserting the subtopic tag into the chat's text;

determining whether a turn has occurred;

responsive to determining that a turn has occurred, determining whether a topic shift has occurred;

responsive to determining that a topic shift has occurred, repeating the first plurality of steps; and

saving a transcript of the chat to a repository in an XML format;

searching the repository by performing a second plurality of steps comprising:

determining whether the search will be a full text search;

responsive to determining that the search will not be a full text search, determining whether the search will be a filtered search;

responsive to determining that the search will be a filtered search, choosing a filter, wherein types of the filter comprise: a topic tag, a user name, and a date;

conducting the search;

determining whether the search was satisfactory;

responsive to determining that the search was not satisfactory, entering feedback by the user; and

responsive to determining that the user wants to view the full text of a found topic, displaying a segment of the transcript corresponding to the found topic;

responsive to determining that another search is to be conducted, repeating the second plurality of steps;

scanning topic tags from the transcript by performing a third plurality of steps comprising:

comparing a scanned topic tag to an auto alert table;

responsive to determining that there is a match between the scanned topic tag and the auto alert table, determining and executing an action that is associated with the scanned topic tag in the auto alert table;

wherein the action comprises exporting the transcript to an e-mail;

responsive to determining that there is another scanned topic tag, repeating the third plurality of steps;

wherein a plurality of bases upon which the determining whether a turn has occurred comprise:

an amount of textual data entered;

a time period; and

a plurality of successive statements.